

Special Education Report

September, 2023



Accomplishments and Successes

- Presented at the New Hampshire Principal Association's June Leadership Academy.



The Role of the LEA (Local Education Agency) in Special Education

Jeanette Souther, Director of Pupil Support, SAU 52 Portsmouth
Stacey Kirby, Director of Special Education, SAU 50 Greenland, New Castle, Newington, Rye
(90 Minute Session-1:45-3:15pm)

The session will include a review of the IEP Process to meet compliance with IDEA and LEA responsibilities during meetings including ensuring decisions are made for students to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and committing district resources for FAPE. We will present practical scenarios and real-world examples and provide opportunities for questions from participants regarding their own experiences.

- The Preschool program is fully staffed. We are very excited about enrollment. Total enrollment is 23 (nine in the full day preK, nine in the morning session of preschool, and five in the afternoon session of preschool). We currently have a few students in the referral process so these numbers may increase. A recent comment from a parent: *"I am very impressed with how the preschool program in Rye is evolving! This is SO exciting for parents in the SAU!"*
- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Rye regarding a pay differential for staff who have RBT training.



Preschool Staff

Back Row - Shauna Larkin (Paraprofessional), Kelsey Crowell (OT),
Katelyn Caswell (PreK Teacher), Laurie Hounam (BCBA)
Front Row - Gina Henshaw (Speech), Meagan Facella (Speech Assistant),
Carole Ryan (Preschool Special Education Teacher)

- ESY in August was a success! We had 34 students who were found eligible for summer services, four students attended programs in their out of district placement, three students received individualized tutoring, and one student received only speech services. We had four preschool students in a group at Rye Elementary School and nineteen kindergarten to grade seven students at Greenland Central School for three weeks. Three families chose not to participate. Students received academic support and related services (speech, OT, PT, BCBA) as ordered in their IEPs. A fourth week was offered for our global skills students with Northeast Passage. We will be looking at the impact on the start of the school year.



Kona Ice Truck that surprised the ESY students and staff on their last day!



Students and staff at Periwinkle Cove in Rye with Northeast Passage

- A huge thank you to Brian Helfrich, Jamie Hudson and his amazing custodial staff, Tamara Hallee, Shonda Thibeault, and Suzanne Cohoon for their help in making the new life skills classroom happen at Greenland Central School!



Life skills classroom at Greenland Central School

Challenges

- We still have an opening in Rye for a school psychologist.
- We were unable to find a one year BCBA for Greenland Central School. We have contracted with The Birchtree Center to support Greenland for the 2023-2024 school year.
- The rate of pay for substitute paraprofessionals in Rye.
- After care not being available for PreK students impacted two families who withdrew from the program.

Work Related to School, School Board, and SAU Goals

- We have hired and are training Registered Behavior Technicians allowing us to contract less with outside agencies. This will benefit our students and staff along with saving money.

Major Initiatives (Possible Future Budget Implications)

- Grant projects have all been approved. A huge thank you to Diane for her help with distribution of the projects' budgets throughout the four school districts.
- Continue to collaborate with SAU 52. The new high school coordinator is Brian Ryan and the new director is Rick Matte. I have an ultimate goal to share a position so we have someone at Portsmouth High School to support our students who receive special education services.

Other

- There are currently 151 identified students, preschool to grade twelve, in SAU 50. This breaks down to 83 Greenland students, 3 New Castle students, 11 Newington students, and 54 Rye students.
- Special Education Terminology- **Local Education Agency (LEA) and Manifestation Meeting**

Local Education Agency (LEA) - The LEA is a representative of the public agency at an IEP team meeting who:



Jeanette and Stacey presenting about the role of the LEAs at the Principals' association leadership academy in June.

- Is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities;
- Is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum;
- Is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the public agency; and
- Is authorized in writing to commit district resources

This person is the decision maker if a team cannot reach a consensus.

Manifestation Meeting - A Manifestation Meeting must be held within ten school days to make a manifestation determination. Special education laws do not restrict a school's ability to suspend a student with disabilities for up to ten cumulative school days in a school year. If the removal constitutes a "change of placement" this meeting must take place.

The team must consider:

- Whether the conduct in question was "caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability;" and
- Whether the conduct in question was the "direct result of the local school's failure to implement the IEP."
- If the answer to either of the above questions is "yes," the conduct is a manifestation of the student's disability.

Consequences of the manifestation determination:

- If the behavior was a manifestation, must conduct and/or review a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and behavior intervention plan (BIP).
- In most circumstances, if it is a manifestation, the school must return the student to placement unless the parent and school decide on different placement.
- If the behavior was not a manifestation, use regular school discipline but with services during removal (a diluted FAPE), including services to prevent the behavior from recurring.